

Tuberculosis and HIV: What You Should Know

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What is tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by bacteria (germs). It can damage the lungs and other parts of the body and can cause serious illness or death if it is not treated with medications. You can have TB in your body without being sick (**latent TB**) and then develop TB disease (**active TB**) at a later time.

How do you get TB?

TB is spread through the air by coughing or sneezing. Latent TB cannot be passed from one person to another. You can only get infected if you are exposed to someone with active, untreated TB. If you spend a lot of time indoors with a family member, roommate, or co-worker who has active TB, you may get infected. (It is hard to get infected if someone with active TB coughs on you once in a public place.) Once a person takes TB medications for several weeks, he or she usually cannot spread the bacteria.

What are the symptoms (signs) of TB?

People who have the following symptoms should be tested for TB by their doctor:

- A cough that lasts for more than two weeks
- Fatigue
- Fever
- Weight loss
- Night sweats

- Appetite loss
- Coughing up blood
- Chest pain

What is a TB screening test?

A tuberculin skin test can tell if you have TB infection. For this test, a small amount of testing fluid is injected under the skin, usually in the arm. If a hard bump shows up on the arm two or three days later, it means you have TB. It is important to go back to your doctor or healthcare provider to double-check the test result. If you test positive, it means you were exposed to someone with active TB and became infected. It does NOT mean you actually have active TB. Your doctor can give you medications to prevent it from becoming active TB. Even if your test is negative, your doctor may want to give you medications to prevent future TB infection if you have been in regular, close contact with someone who has active TB.

Do all people with HIV need to have a TB test?

Yes. People with both HIV and TB infection are much more likely to get active TB than people who do not have HIV. This happens because the immune systems of people with HIV usually are weaker and cannot fight off the TB. People with HIV should be tested once a year, unless they have active TB or have had a positive TB test. Even if they do not have any TB symptoms,

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What is drug-resistant TB?

If people with active TB do not take their medications or stop taking them too soon, the TB germ will not be killed and they will not be cured. This means the TB has become drug-resistant. They will need to switch to different TB medications and take them for a longer time. People with drug-resistant TB can spread it to other people; when that happens, the TB medications will not work for them either.

It is very important for people with active TB to take all their medications for as long as needed. A special program called Directly Observed Therapy (DOT) can make sure that people take all their medications, stay healthy, and don't spread their TB to other people.

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their doctors may want to give them medications to prevent active TB from developing.

What if I have active TB?

Active TB can almost always be treated. Most people will be given four different drugs, usually for six months or more. After you are diagnosed, your name is given to the local Department of Health. They will notify anyone who was in close contact with you and offer them testing and treatment. The local Department of Health keeps any TB information confidential — it is not reported to anyone else.

If you have TB, don't spread it to others. Get in the habit of covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze. Ask people around you to do the same. If you explain to people that this is a way to prevent the spread of TB, they may follow your example.

I'm HIV positive. How can I protect myself from TB?

- Talk with your doctor about your risk of getting TB.
- Get tested for TB.
- If someone you know has started treatment

for active TB, stay away until that person's doctor tells you it's safe.

- Encourage people with TB to take all their medications and complete the treatment. If they are not taking the medications, avoid contact with them.
- Encourage people to cover their mouths when they cough or sneeze.

Can I get TB from being in a hospital?

Most hospitals have made changes in their buildings and in how they find and treat TB. Hospitals must do everything possible to protect patients and staff from TB — like putting active TB patients in their own rooms. So, there is a low risk of catching TB while visiting or staying in a hospital.

Are children at risk for getting TB?

Children with TB have a greater chance of becoming sick with active TB. Children who are HIV positive should be tested for TB, especially if they live in places where TB is common. All children who have been in contact with people with active TB should be checked by a doctor.

To find out more about HIV and TB

New York State Department of Health HIV/AIDS Information

English: 1-800-541-AIDS

Spanish: 1-800-233-SIDA

TTY HIV/AIDS information line: 1-212-925-9560. Voice callers can use the New York Relay System: call 711 or 1-800-421-1220 and ask the operator to dial 1-212-925-9560.

For TB facts: www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/communicable_diseases/en/tb.htm

For HIV/AIDS facts: www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/diseases/aids/index.htm

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/tb/tb.shtml>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/nchstp/tb/faqs/qa.htm

American Lung Association

1-800-548-8252

<http://www.lungusa.org>